thetech.com

Volume 139, Number 3



WEATHER, p. 2 FRI: 42°F 24°F Sunnv SAT: 42°F 34°F Mostly sunny

Thursday, February 21, 2019

BC residents worry that renewal might erode their culture

BC Exec was notified of renewal decision two hours before residents

By Kaitlyn Hennacy, Zoe Anderson, and Zoe Sheill

Burton Conner residents are concerned that their dorm will lose its culture during its two-year renewal from June 2020 to August 2022. All residents will be required to move out during this time period.

"At this point, BC Exec has just been listening to what admins have said and trying to ask questions that residents will also have. So I think most of [the change] has just been imposed thus far," Alice Zhang '21,

Burton Conner president, said in an interview with The Tech.

BC Exec was not involved in formulating the move-out process, including the decision that students would move out in groups of eight, Zhang said. She noted that eight is already the maximum number of students that can apply to move in a group in the current housing switch

According to Zhang, BC Exec was notified of the decisions two

BC Renewal, Page 5



The MIT Ring Committee premieres the Brass Rat for the Class of 2021 Feb. 15.

Dan Huttenlocher named the College of Computing's first dean

Huttenlocher comes to MIT from Cornell, where he helped to found grad engineering and design school Cornell Tech

By Emma Bingham SENIOR EDITOR

Dan Huttenlocher PhD '88, founding dean of Cornell Tech, has been named dean of the College of

Computing. Huttenlocher, whose name is pronounced "hut-in-locker," will visit MIT for the College of Computing Celebration next week, but he will not officially step into his new role until this summer.

Huttenlocher helped found both Cornell's School of Computer and Information Sciences and Cornell Tech, a graduate engineering and design school in New York City. He currently serves on the boards of directors at Amazon and Corning and chairs the board of the MacArthur Foundation.

In an interview with The Tech, Huttenlocher said he sees the College as having three main components.

The first is about computing fields and their evolution. Huttenlocher drew parallels between the current state of computing and the state of engineering at the founding of MIT.

There was "a lot of fluidity about what the disciplines were" in the mid to late 1800s, he said. "We're about to enter a very similar time period of figuring out what computing is and what the different disciplines are."

The second component involves what he calls "computing across the disciplines." Computing is becoming increasingly important across different fields, and MIT should lead this trend.

However, he doesn't believe computing will subsume the other departments at MIT, as some fear. Instead, over the next few decades, he said he expects it will become integrated into the curriculum, just as math is integrated into many different fields now.

"In many fields, there's really significant math there, and the math is different in different fields. I think over time, computing will become like that," he said. He added that MIT must take initiative in integrating computation into the curriculum. "We can't wait around for twenty years.'

The third component of Huttenlocher's vision for the College is a focus on the societal impact of computing and AI. As chair of the MacArthur foundation board, he has advised the foundation on various issues related to technology and society, for example, in the Technology in the Public Interest

He views his job as dean partly as "making sure [the college] stays focused" on the societal issues around computing," though "exactly how

Dean, Page 2

Vice President Kirk Kolenbrander to leave for new role at SNHU

After 29 years at MIT, Kolenbrander will help lead recently formed SNHU college

By Soomin Chun

Vice President Kirk Kolenbrander is planning to leave the Institute in March after 29 years at MIT. His last day will be March 2. He will subsequently be serving as the executive vice president for the College of Engineering, Technology, and Aeronautics at the Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU).

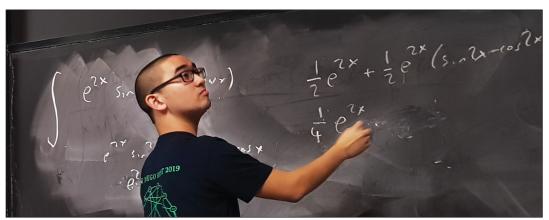
Kolenbrander's started at MIT as an assistant professor in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering in 1990. During his career as a faculty member, he won the MIT Baker Award for Faculty Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching and the MIT Smith Award for Outstanding Faculty Contributions to Student Life.

In 1995, Kolenbrander helped create the IAP program MIT LeaderShape, a leadership program that helps students "discern their leadership style" and offers them feedback on vision statements about changing the world, according to the program application portal.

After his time as a faculty member, Kolenbrander also served three MIT Presidents since 1998, having acted as special assistant to Chuck Vest, senior advisor and then vice president to Susan Hockfield, and most recently, vice president to current President L. Rafael

As part of MIT's leadership team, Kolenbrander played a key role in MIT's Presidential Search Committee that elected Hockfield and then managed searches to assemble her senior team, including appointing Reif as provost.

Vice President, Page 2



ASSEL ISMOLDAYEVA—THE TECH

A student competes in the Harvard-MIT Math Tournament Integration Bee Feb. 16.

Celebrations for the MIT Stephen A. Schwarzman College of Computing are next week, Feb. 26–28. The schedule of events and other information is available at helloworld.mit.edu.

The application to **host prefrosh for CPW** is now live. It is due March 23.

Sophomores, ring sales end Friday 4 p.m. Information is available at

Final-term seniors, submit your minor completion form by Friday to avoid paying a \$50 late fee.

Interested in **joining** *The Tech*? Stop by for dinner Sunday at 6 p.m. or email join@tech.mit.edu.

Send news and tips to news@tech.mit.edu.

DEATH BY COMMITTEE

The College of Computing working groups aren't putting ethics at the forefront of their work. OPINION, p. 6

ALLOWING SWAMY TO SPEAK

MIT must guard freedom of expression. OPINION, p. 7

THE POWER OF CONVERSATION

Deplatforming speakers like Swamy prevents the exchange and refinement of ideas. OPINION, p. 7

CONFLICT IN YEMEN

Khashoggi's killing presents complications to the U.S. strategy towards the Middle East. OPINION, p. 7

SECTIONS

Fun Pages 3 Opinion 6 2 THE TECH
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2019

Important lesson from Cornell experience is to be explicit about tensions between objectives, Huttenlocher said

Dean, from Page 1

that will manifest is a much bigger conversation," he said.

He also emphasized the importance of engaging people outside academia in the discussion of societal issues.

"These issues are not just academic issues," he said. "They're issues that will benefit from further academic study, but I think if we're just doing academic work, we're not taking advantage of the full breadth

of people that we need to be working with."

Huttenlocher, who obtained a masters in EECS from MIT in 1984 and a PhD in CS from the precursor to CSAIL in 1988, has previously worked as a computer science professor at Cornell and a researcher at Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center, and he co-founded a financial technology company called Intelligent Markets in the early 2000s.

He has also served on two MIT visiting committees, one for Under-

graduate and Graduate Programs and the other for the MIT Media

One of the biggest lessons he will take from his time as a Cornell administrator is "to try to be really explicit about what the objectives are and where the objectives might be in tension with one another," Huttenlocher said.

He already sees a tension between his first and second components — the idea that MIT needs to maintain both the depth of its computer science research and the breadth of computer science applications in different fields.

"An inherent tension is that every discipline in academia really needs to make sure that it's preserving its disciplinary depth as judged by peers," he explained. However, "the flip side is that computing has become so important to so many different areas of academia."

Next week, MIT will host a threeday celebratory event about the College of Computing, with speakers including former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker, World Wide Web creator Sir Tim Berners-Lee, and New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman. In May, working groups composed of faculty, staff, and students will produce a report on topics including the new college's organizational structure, faculty appointments, curriculum and degrees, focus on social implications and responsibilities, and infrastructure.

Kolenbrander wants to rethink STEM learning

Vice President, from Page 1

At SNHU, Kolenbrander will help the year-and-a-half-old college rethink how "engineering education and STEM education can be more effective, more accommodating, and more inviting," said SNHU President and CEO Paul LeBlanc, according to the Union Leader. LeBlanc also said Kolenbrander's support in making STEM education accessible to underprivileged communities played a big role in his hiring.

Got a lot on your mind?

Share some thoughts with us!
Write for Campus Life. join@tech.mit.edu
Or join us for dinner, Sundays 6 p.m. (W20-483)



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Tuna

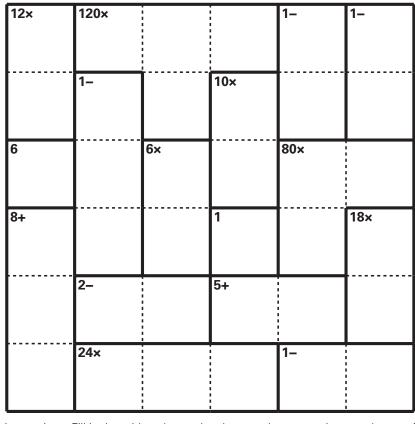
Solution, page 5

	5					4		
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		8					2	

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column, row, and 3 by 3 grid contains exactly one of each of the digits 1 through 9.

Peaches

Solution, page 5



Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

T-Shirt Choices by Carolyn Steward

Solution, page 5

ACROSS

- 1 Performers in a film
- 5 NBA officials
- 9 __ and blood (kin) 14 Skunk's defense
- 15 Vogue competitor
- 16 Spooky
- 17 Walk through water
- 18 Sweater material
- 19 Fridge forays
- 20 Humidifier or toaster
- 23 Folk tales
- 24 Crunchy sandwich, for short
- 25 Steak specification 30 Canoe implements
- 34 Pile up
- 35 Constricting snake 36 Narrow opening
- 37 Letters on a tach 38 Insignias
- 42 "__ moment please . . ."
- 43 Amaze
- 45 "__ you kidding?" 46 Motive

- 48 Overblown promotion
- 49 Something difficult to do
- 52 Gentle touch
- 54 Talks and talks 55 Diner inventory
- 62 Play a ukulele
- 63 Cameo shape
- 64 Taboo thing
- 65 Silly
- 66 Little taste
- 67 Typical Egyptian
- 68 Howled
- 69 Days before holidays
- 70 Allows

DOWN

- 1 Dairy herd
- 2 Cain's father
- 3 Carbonated drink
- 4 Garden lattice
- 5 Fix, as leftovers 6 One running off to wed
- 7 Failure of a film 8 Put on the market
- 9 Untamed

- 10 Crude shelters
- 11 Norse explorer 12 Ally (with)
- 13 Fathers and uncles
- 21 Dirty rat
- 22 Type of girder
- 25 Swampy land
- 26 Holding nothing
- 27 Obstruct, as a stream
- 28 More adept
- 29 Sushi spread
- 31 Vocally
- 32 Washer cycle
- 33 Ranch herd
- 39 Mediterranean island nation
- 40 Swimsuit top
- 41 Range of view
- 44 Faraway planet
- 47 Weapons cache
- 50 Whirl
- 51 Top-level Boy Scouts 53 Activated, as alarms
- 55 Sicilian spewer
- 56 Dental photo
- 17 18 19 20 24 30 31 32 33 25 | 26 | 27 34 36 37 38 39 40 42 43 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53

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66 68

57 Part of an ear

58 Tel __, Israel

59 1990s veep

60 Swarming insect 61 Weeps noisily

16

62 Brother or sister, for short

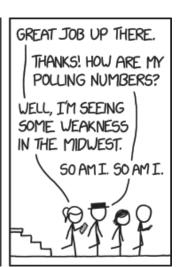
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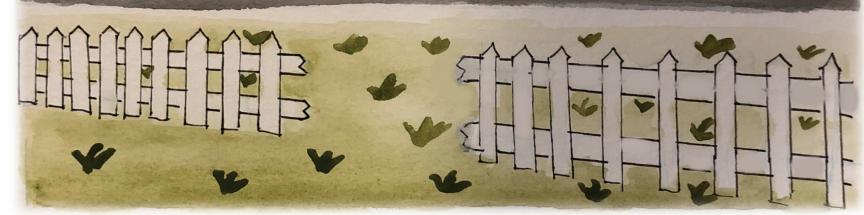


The best wedge issue is an actual wedge.

Introduction to Real Analysis by Anshula Gandhi

What's so bad about sets with gaps?

Since irrational numbers exist, there must be 'gaps' in the rational line of numbers.



This gap is somewhat surprising, since it seems counterintuitive to the fact that rationals are densely packed. That is, between every two rational numbers, you can find another rational number (consider the number (ptq)/2 that exists between rationals p and q). So, given that rationals are so dense, it's surprising that we found a gap at the square root of two.



It's not only surprising, but also somewhat inconvenient that rationals have gaps.



Sets that don't have gaps (or 'complete' sets), such as the real line, are useful for building up calculus.*



*For example, we know that limits are a foundational concept in calculus. But a sequence might not have a limit in an incomplete set. For example, consider the sequence of rational numbers that slowly approaches pi: 3, 3.1, 3.14, and so on. It will have no limit in the rationals (because its limit is pi).

Thursday, February 21, 2019

The Tech 5

Resident: MIT should allow BC to live in New Vassar during renewal

BC Renewal, from Page 1

hours before BC residents were informed.

The Division of Student Life and BC Exec will work together this spring to assemble a transition team to identify student needs, provide input on the renewal of Burton Conner, and work through the logistics of relocating students, according to an FAQ document sent to BC residents.

In order to support residents, the administration has agreed to allow BC GRTs and Heads of House to continue to support the community and give BC leaders standing in the UA and DormCon during the renewal, according to the FAQ. The administration will also work with the transition team to develop community events.

"For the students who are going to go through this transition, two years is a very important piece of [their] experience at MIT, and so we don't want [them] to feel like [they're] in transition," BC Head of House Janelle Knox-Hayes said at a BC community meeting the day after the renewal was announced.

The policies differ from those given to students in New House, who could apply to move with larger groups of people when New House was renovated. "Admin will always say that that was because they were in a crunch for New House and the pipes burst; it wasn't a planned renovation," Zhang said. In contrast, BC will have had 1.5 academic years to plan their transition.

Peter Williams '21, a B3 (Burton third) resident, told *The Tech* in an interview that the administration could help preserve BC's culture by allowing residents to move together to New Vassar and then back to BC after it reopens.

New Vassar is set to open in fall 2020. Some BC residents will be able to move to New Vassar, but not as one dorm-wide group. The FAQ emphasized that New Vassar is not intended to serve as a "swing dorm" for displaced students, as that would interfere with the dorm's development of its own identity and culture.

The administration is "prioritizing a need to create new cultures,

because I honestly think they don't want these ones — which is fine — but I just don't like the lack of honesty about it," Williams said.

Some residents are concerned about the loss of unique features of BC, such as suite style living. However, Senior Associate Dean of Housing and Residential Services David Friedrich said at the community meeting last Thursday, "There are — I think — certain restrictions in how [BC is] just laid out that we're more likely than not to have suites in it" after the renewal.

Residents are also concerned that BC post-renewal may not allow murals painted directly on walls. According to Friedrich, the administration will look at ways to support creativity "when we're in a newly repaired and improved building where we want to make sure we're being good stewards of the facility."

The DSL is "not really doing much at all to help the students from Burton Conner preserve their communities," Wilson Spearman '22, a resident of C2 (Conner two),

KEVIN LY—THE TECH

Burton Conner will be closed for renewal from June 2020 to August 2022. All residents must move out during this time.

told *The Tech* in an interview. "The DSL will make decisions, listen to students afterwards, and then not change the decision that they made based on the students' input," he said.

Anna Kooperberg '21, a B4 (Burton four) resident, told *The Tech* that she thought that the administration does "care about students," but that its different priorities sometimes conflict.

Austin Edelman '21, a B2 (Burton two) resident, told *The Tech*

that he thought that the renewal was "sad but necessary."

The Office of Campus Planning and Department of Facilities anticipate having an update on the scope of the work in the fall, Director of the Office of Campus Planning Jon Alvarez wrote in an email sent to *The Tech*.

The work could include updates to the roof, facade, mechanical and electrical systems, and plumbing, Friedrich told *The Tech* in an interview.

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Solution to Tuna

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7	9	2	4	5	1	6	3	8
3	8	5	7	9	6	2	4	1
1	4	6	2	3	8	5	9	7
9	3	4	1	2	5	7	8	6
5	2	7	8	6	3	9	1	4
6	1	8	9	4	7	3	2	5

Solution to Peaches

4	1	5	6	3	2
3	6	4	5	2	1
6	3	1	2	5	4
5	2	6	1	4	3
2	5	3	4	1	6
1	4	2	3	6	5







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GUEST COLUMN

College of Computing working groups are missing experts on ethics

The college's task force has made no measurable commitment to ensuring the ethical development of technology

By Mark Goldman

When President Reif announced the College of Computing (CoC) over four months ago, he claimed that one of its three major aims was to promote the ethical usage of AI and its societal impact. "As computing reshapes our world," Reif said to MIT News, "MIT intends to help make sure it does so for the good of all." With recent uses of AI to manipulate elections, polarize our society, and exacerbate racial pricing discrimination, I completely agree with the need to more strongly embed ethics into the curriculum and research at MIT. What disturbs me is that the strong language of these announcements, like "the need for bold action, at scale and with speed," appears to contradict what I hear from graduate students in EECS whose department and/or advisors assure them nothing will change. No new ethics course requirements. No additional oversight on the societal impacts of their research. Nothing.

As I wondered whether the Institute was actually serious about ethical change, Provost Schmidt announced the creation of five working groups to guide different parts of the CoC. As I read his letter, it seemed to eat away at my hope for an ethical MIT. While ethics was the focus of one of the working groups, it did not appear to be part of the other four. I felt MIT had isolated ethics from the discussions happening in the other working groups, like faculty assignments, computing resources, and curriculum development.

But as I asked myself, "Who is not at the table?," my cynicism grew. Of the 100+ committee members listed, not one comes from the Office of Religious, Spiritual, and Ethical Life, which recently had its name changed to emphasize its role as an ethical resource and provides support for individuals and the entire Institute. During her inauguration last year as the Chaplain of the Institute, Reverend Kirstin Boswell-Ford said, "We are here to help guide the MIT community toward being more inclusive, more caring, more supportive, and more ethically minded." Excluding experts who grapple with difficult, ethical questions through their daily

work continues the trend of undervaluing religious and ethical voices at MIT, such that the committee will lack the ingenuity to reshape MIT.

Also entirely missing from the room are researchers from the MIT's Algorithmic Justice League, a group widely recognized for its work on bias within AI. Since the announcement of the CoC, the group has been mentioned in Time, Bloomberg News, and DailyMail among other outlets. Excluding the most widely known MIT researchers working on ethics and AI from the working groups makes me question the ethical commitments stated when publicising the CoC. Given both the segregated and exclusionary nature of the working groups, "death by committee" feels like the most probable fate of ethics at MIT.

Despite my distrust, I asked the Provost about commitments the steering committee has made to ensure that ethics will not be swept aside as a billion dollars gets sliced up and fought over by various schools and departments. In his response in an email to *The Tech,* Schmidt reinforced the importance of ethics: "It's also incumbent on us to conduct research in a way that not only advances the technology, but also advances our collective understanding of how to deploy the technology. Wherever the research leads, there should be policy work in parallel. And even beyond considering policy and the regulatory framework, we should approach any given research problem and solution design with an ethical lens." This statement reassured me that I had not been misattributing the large ethical promises MIT made when launching the CoC, but did not indicate any measurable commitment to ethics.

When answering a question about the act of separating ethics into its own working group, Schmidt mentioned that the cochairs of the working groups would have regular meetings, so that ethical considerations can be raised to other committees. This idea sounded nice, but it still doesn't ensure ethics is truly integrated into the other meetings.

While the Provost explained his general views on ethics, he did not mention any spe-

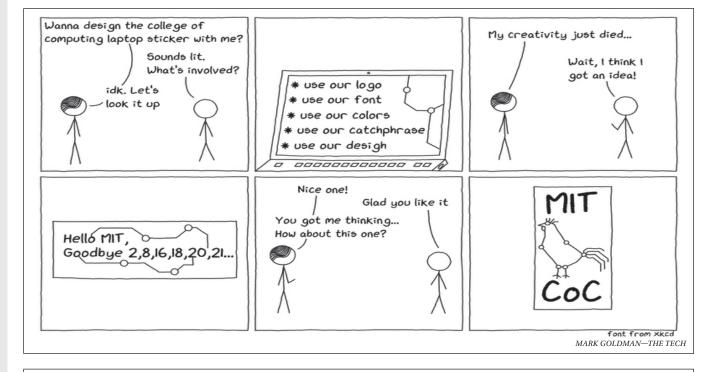
cific metrics that would ensure that the CoC will embrace ethics. Has any fraction of the billion dollars been earmarked for the ethical usage of AI? How many of the 50 faculty hires will be reserved for experts on the ethical usage of technology? To these questions he responded, "Answers ... will emerge from the activities of the working groups." Given who is excluded from the working groups and how they are structured, his message amplified my anxiety.

Despite all this, I still have some hope. If we speak out publicly, MIT has to listen, just like it has in the past. For example, after people started publicly discussing issues with finding support after experiencing sexual violence at MIT (*The Tech* published four-sucharticlesin Spring 2014), MIT conducted a survey on sexual assault in late 2014, created the Title IX office in 2015, increased transparency regarding investigations in an annual Title IX report, expanded prevention and support programs through Violence Prevention and Response, and required MIT faculty to complete online gender-based violence training.

Just like the #MeToo movement provided a critical mass of survivors with the confidence to drive change, the CoC provides us with an opening to demand MIT act ethically. Investing your time in this endeavor could not be more valuable. Ensuring MIT fulfills its commitment to ethics over the next year will impact humanity for generations. Take a moment, think of a way MIT could be more ethical, and share it on the idea bank. If administrators don't promise this semester that they will do what you suggest, ask them why. Then refine your understanding of the issue. Then ask them again. If they still don't listen, call them out publicly. And continue to ask until MIT commits to the ethical promises they made when announcing the CoC.

Tell MIT what it needs to do to become ethical (and support what others suggest) at comptf.mit.edu.

Mark Goldman is a graduate student in the MIT Department of Chemical Engineering.



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The Yemeni war and its implications for the U.S.

How an American multifaceted approach has both failed and created hope, and how the Khashoggi killing presents a grave complication to the war in Yemen

By Octavio Vega

In the wake of the Jamal Khashoggi assassination, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution on Dec. 13 dictating that the U.S. should withdraw its support for the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen. On Feb. 13, the House of Representatives voted to directly restrict aid to Saudi Arabia in the conflict with Yemen. This includes limiting the presence of U.S. forces and halting the sale of arms to the Saudis, coming in opposition to President Trump's historical policy towards the conflict some call the largest humanitarian crisis on earth.

Here at MIT, we understand the tension of U.S.-Saudi relations. Numerous research projects on campus have Saudi sponsors, with participants hopeful that Saudi Arabia was developing a more progressive society only to become largely disenchanted following Khashoggi's demise. For us, the outcome of this battle will reverberate in our community just as it will across the

The recommendations made by Congress are not ultimately out of place. Their premise is to limit the devastation occurring in Yemen and to rebuke the actions of the Saudi Arabian crown prince; however, they will soon find that these goals may unfortunately act in opposition to one another. History has taught us about the dangers of power vacuums, and the reproachful actions of Saudi Arabia challenge the U.S. to rebalance its alliance with the unprincipled kingdom. With important stakeholders looming over the warzone in Yemen, the U.S. cannot afford the loss of strategic allies.

History of the war

After the Yemeni revolution of 2011, Zaidi Islamic militants of the Houthi insurgency besieged the capital of Sana'a in September 2014. Following the fall of military bases north of the port city of Aden, the Saudi government launched an intervention in March 2015 to curtail the advance of the Houthi insurgents throughout Yemen and restore the government of Yemeni President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

The U.S. actively supplies the Saudi forces with weapons which, in turn, are used in the Saudi strikes against their opposition in Yemen, with a total in arms deliveries of nearly

\$18 billion at the end of 2017. The United Nations alleges that Iran is the primary supplier of weapons to the Houthis given the models of weapons discovered in Yemen, and Iranian proxies have demonstrated support for the Houthi movement through technical assistance in weapons procurement.

History has taught us about the dangers of power vacuums, and the reproachful actions of Saudi Arabia challenge the U.S. to rebalance its alliance with the kingdom.

The U.S. has a strong interest in maintaining stability in Saudi Arabia, as the country has been a historical ally and one of the only Middle Eastern nations willing to negotiate with the U.S.; however, the recent killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi presents a profound complication to policy-making towards Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

A human rights crisis has arisen in Yemen as a result of the war, with civilians being routinely killed by coalition forces on both sides and those displaced suffering starvation and death.

The conflict is a multifaceted one - contending with both the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and the obscure future of U.S.-Saudi relations — so, too, must be the American response to this policy reconfiguration.

Role of the United States

There was a time when the U.S. could more easily balance the repercussions of the damage of war in two primary ways: revising the sale of arms to the Saudis and their role in the conflict or reconfiguring U.S. troops as well as preventing attacks on populated locations in Yemen. With the recent congressional decisions, the U.S. will be pushed to pursue some measure of all options with little left to balance.

While the legislation presents hope for reducing the amount of blood on American hands in Yemen, ceasing to arm the Saudis will not necessarily avert the humanitarian crisis. Allied Emirati forces employ Colombian mercenaries to fight in Yemen as well, meaning that the combat waged by these forces will also arguably result in civilian harm, even if less. Saudi forces are known to leverage the service of Sudanese mercenaries — many of whom are only children — as well, meaning that the void left from U.S. arms sales could be filled by an increased use of foreign fighters.

However, to curtail American complicity in the horrors of strikes harming the Yemeni people and rebel against the actions undertaken by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the U.S. should significantly reduce the quantity of arms it sells to Saudi Arabia. Although potentially weakening the counterinsurgent coalition, this demonstrably decreases outward U.S. support for the Saudi government and presents hope for limiting the suffering experienced in Yemen.

However, drone strikes coming directly from the U.S. serve as an action not corrupted by influence from external parties such as the Saudis and therefore maintain explicit American initiative instead of that from proxies. If the U.S. ceases all drone strikes, then the protective force in the Arabian Peninsula will be weakened, enabling the insurgent threat to proliferate and the Houthi and Iranian influence to spread throughout the peninsula if left unchecked. If Iranian influence develops in the Arabian Peninsula, then the strength of U.S. allies will be compromised, making complete withdrawal a

The assassination of Jamal Khashoggi presents possibly the greatest complexity to the ensuing Yemeni war thus far.

While the missile strikes by Saudi Arabia are damaging to both enemies and civilians in Yemen, drone strikes directly from the U.S. are, while imperfect, more efficient and precise. These have the potential to extinguish more of the Houthi violence as well as continue to prevent its expansion. Simultaneously, the U.S. provided more than \$39.7 million in aid to Yemen in FY2017, which the U.S. should increase to continue aiding the nation's distressed population without changing the mechanics of Saudi relations.

Looking to the future

There is no perfect solution to this conflict, and the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi presents possibly the greatest complexity to the ensuing Yemeni war thus far. If the U.S. were to retaliate against the despicable actions of the Saudi government by changing the course of the Yemeni war, then it would risk destabilizing the entire balance of power in the Middle East. Although the Saudi leadership has demonstrated a heavy degree of worrisome corruption in recent times, the U.S. should not ignore its significance as a crucial strategic ally during a time where the scars of Middle Eastern war continue to haunt nearly every corner of its geopolitical territory.

In such times, necessary compromises are challenging to reach — but no less required. The Trump administration should, in part, pursue the recommendations of the recent Senate resolution. Nevertheless, while curbing the sale of arms to the Saudis, the Trump administration should not remove American troops from Yemen, nor should it stop the drone strikes against Houthi militants so as to maintain a militaristic bulwark against the Houthis. Abandoning support for current allies in the conflict will do more harm than good for U.S. interests — Saudi Arabia's unscrupulous tendencies should be altered to foster a healthy diplomatic relationship with the U.S.

As battlefield conditions worsen in Yemen, the United Nations hopes to catalyze peace talks between the parties involved. Although diplomatic resolutions have thus far failed to bring peace to Yemen, pursuit of the proper policy should ultimately work in hopes of making a peaceful resolution the final step to successful problem solving in the Arabian peninsula. In a reflection of every conflict transpiring in the Middle East, the Yemeni war's influence echoes far beyond its borders — especially for the U.S.

Octavio Vega is a member of the MIT Class of 2022 studying systems neuroscience, as well as electrical engineering and comput-

phobic ideas, regardless of the topic of their speech. This is a fairly immature viewpoint that is tribal in nature and counterproductive to its own objective. Our goal is to discover the bad ideas and replace them with better ones. You want this to happen in yourself and in other people, which can only occur when those different ideas meet.

While the work of refining ideas is certainly carried out by all institutions, it is our academic institutions which are best suited to the task, especially when ideas are radical. If you dislike Swamy's viewpoints, then imagine what a positive experience coming to MIT could be for him. Positive interactions with our community could soften or change his views with time. Now imagine how likely he is to make those change his own if we give him the boot in such a disrespectful way. The world would not function if we treated each other solely based on everyone's worst attributes and ideas.

If you'd rather not hear ideas you disagree with, then don't - perhaps you worry they will sway you, otherwise what actual threat do they pose? But don't be so condescending as to imply that anyone who hears Swamy speak will be instantly converted to share his full set of beliefs. Disinviting him wins protesters brownie points but does nothing to improve humanity. It is a foolish

Please don't sign the petition and prevent the exchange and refinement of ideas. Let an academic institution do what it is good at: skeptically investigate any idea with respect, integrity, and minimal bias. If not in the academic institutions, then where, my friends? Who will do the difficult work of critically evaluating even the most radical thoughts if not us?

There is no courage in not having a conversation and denouncing a person before they can even speak. It takes courage to have the conversation and challenge another person's ideas, not from a place of disgust or self-righteousness, but from a place of understanding and compassion. Let that be the path forward. It is the more difficult and less traveled path. It requires patience and compassion.

Stephen Filippone

Alumnus responds to **MIT India Conference** controversy

To the editors,

As an engaged alumnus, and a wellwisher of the Institute, I am writing this short letter to express my appreciation for MIT's carefully weighed decision to support the students' majority vote to allow Swamy to speak in the recently concluded MIT India Conference.

Some of Swamy's public policy postures lately may be arguably seen as narrow and sometimes sharp in rhetoric. But Swamy is a man for many seasons and tastes — a brilliant economist who wrote a seminal paper with Paul Samuelson in 1974; a man who opposed an internal emergency imposed by the then-Indian government in 1975: then he championed for the freedom of all the citizens. Lately, a champion against corruption and at substantial personal cost. Here is what The New York Times had to report.

The petition that was circulated to disinvite Swamy is not without factual basis. I know several faculty petitioners and others They are distinguished intellectuals.

But the question for all of us is simply this: should the Institute have permitted Swamy's presentation based on the general respect for First Amendments rights or is Swamy too extreme?

I remember MIT dealing with this issue in the 1980s and 1990s under Presidents Paul Gray and Chuck Vest. As then, the current MIT leadership has balanced all the elements carefully. As Chancellor Barnhart and Provost Schmidt wrote in a letter to the editor, "For MIT as a university, guarding freedom of expression is fundamental to our mission of advancing knowledge and educating students. We are and must be committed to ensuring that different points of view — even those we reject — can be heard and debated in a respectful and safe way."

These are challenging and difficult issues but MIT's decision — in the ultimate analysis - will serve us all well. MIT will and should remain an inclusive place. MIT's leadership has clearly reaffirmed this. "As a global institution that depends on bringing together talented people from around the world, we are and must be profoundly committed to making sure we create a community where people of every background — in terms of nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation and more - can feel welcome and supported," Barnhart and Schmidt's let-

MIT is a wonderful place, and I wish the Institute much continued success.

-Gurumurthy Kalyanaram PhD '89

Editor's note: these letters were sent to The Tech prior to the MIT India Conference, which took place Feb. 16.

PhD student responds

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

to column on MIT **India Conference**

This is a response to an article published Feb. 9, "Shunned by Harvard, Feted by MIT." To the editors,

I've been fairly concerned by deplatforming events in the last five years at U.S. universities. Deplatforming, also known as "no platform," is a form of boycott that denies a person or organization a platform to speak. Now it appears to be happening here. This may not be the first time this has han pened — please feel free to bring other instances to my attention — but this is as good an opportunity as any to explore the topic.

Much of my discussion is general to deplatforming and not relevant to Subramanian Swamy because, without knowing the topic of his talk — though it appears to be only about economics — I find it difficult to make any judgements as to the appropriateness of his presence. Nonetheless, others have made judgements. There is currently a petition asking that

President Reif consider disinviting Swamy from speaking at the 2019 MIT India Conference. I'm surprised to already see 1,941 people sign the petition. And, I'm concerned that those signing have not considered the full implications of their actions.

In a recent opinion piece published in The Tech, the strongest argument for deplatforming is a claim that MIT's reputation would be tarnished by allowing someone to speak here who is linked to racist or Islamo-

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8 THE TECH THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2019

Explore: The Student Experience

Computing Exposition

Tuesday, February 26 2:00–4:30 pm

Charles M. Vest Student Street, Building 32 & Building 76 Lobby

Bubble Tea, Popcorn, and Snacks

Perspectives from Luminaries—A Panel on Computing and Cognition

Tuesday, February 26 5:00–6:30 pm

Huntington Hall, Building 10-250

Opportunities and challenges of interdisciplinary work in both research and industry

Barbara Liskov, Pattie Maes, Jaime Teevan, Laura Schulz, Jeanette Wing

Reception to Follow

A.M. Turing Award Panel

Wednesday, February 27 5:30–7:00 pm Kresge Auditorium,

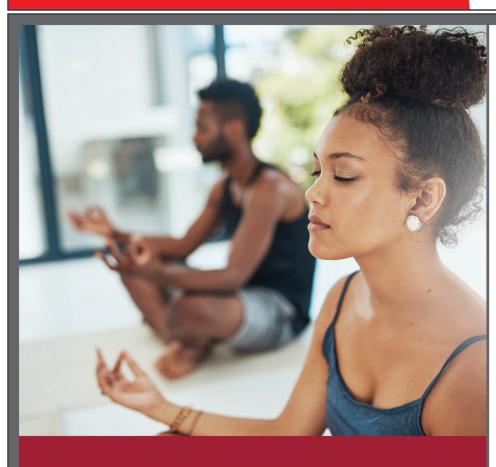
Reception to Follow

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Hello World, Hello MIT.

More Information: helloworld.mit.edu #MITComputing

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